

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4887

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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S E C R E T VIENTIANE 4899

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, LA

SUBJ: LAO PROTOCOL NEGOTIATIONS: SOUVANNA MAKES
TWO CONCESSIONS TO PATHET LAO

REF: VIENTIANE 4844

BEGIN SUMMARY: AT JULY 6 MEETING WITH PHOUMI, PRIMIN
MADE TWO CONCESSIONS TO LPF IN MILITARY FIELD WITHOUT
RECEIVING ANYTHING IN EXCHANGE. THIS DEVELOPMENT
PROBABLY EXPLAINS LPF OPTIMISM RE PROGRESS IN
NEGOTIATIONS. SOUVANNA'S MOVE HAS UNDERCUT PHENG'S
NEGOTIATING POSITION AND RISKS ALIENATING FAR GENERAL
STAFF. END SUMMARY.

1. WHEN I CALLED ON PHENG, EVENING JULY 9, HE WAS
UPSET ABOUT PRIMIN GIVING WAY TO LPF ON TWO ISSUES
WHICH PHENG SAID FAR GENERAL STAFF HAD CONSIDERED
IMPORTANT. PHENG SAID THAT HE HAD NOT REPEAT NOT
ATTENDED JULY 6 MEETING BETWEEN PRIMIN AND PHOUMI
(WHICH MAY EXPLAIN HIS PREVIOUS RELUCTANCE TO TALK TO
ME ABOUT THIS MEETING, AS REPORTED REFTEL) AND THAT
HE ONLY HEARD OF RESULTS FROM PRIMIN NEXT DAY, JULY 7.
DURING JULY 6 MEETING, PRIMIN HAD AGREED TO LPF REQUEST
FOR 32 BOUNDARY STAKES AT SITES PROPOSED IN ARTICLE
12 OF LPF DRAFT PROTOCOL. (RLG DRAFT PROPOSED 62 STAKES,
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INCLUDING THE 32 DEMANDED BY LPF. THE RLG'S ADDITIONAL

30 STAKES WOULD HAVE ESTABLISHED RLG CLAIM TO CONTESTED TERRITORY OR TO TERRAIN WHERE RLG HAD NOMINAL PRESENCE AT TIME OF CEASEFIRE.) PRIMIN ALSO AGREED DURING JUNE 6 MEETING TO WITHDRAW RLG PROPOSAL FOR THE STATIONING OF JOINT LAO CONTROL TEAMS AT 47 SITES, AS SET FORTH IN ARTICLE 21 OF RLG DRAFT PROTOCOL. FAR GENERAL STAFF HAD ATTACHED CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE TO SENDING JOINT CONTROL TEAMS TO THESE SITES BECAUSE IT WOULD HAVE GIVEN FAR ACCESS TO LOCATIONS SUCH AS SAM NEUA, PHONG SALY AND OTHER POINTS INSIDE LPF-HELD ZONE.

2. PHENG SAID THAT SOUVANNA DID NOT EXTRACT OR, FOR THAT MATTER, DEMAND ANY CONCESSIONS FROM PHOUMI IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS ACQUIESCENCE IN LPF POSITION ON THE TWO ABOVE-MENTIONED POINTS.

3. WHEN PHENG MET WITH PHOUMI ON JULY 7, PHENG TRIED TO REOPEN DISCUSSION ON EMPLACEMENT OF BOUNDARY STAKES AND STATIONING OF JOINT CONTROL TEAMS, THE TWO SUBJECTS WHICH PHOUMI HAD DISCUSSED WITH PRIMIN. PHOUMI REPLIED THAT SOUVANNA HAD ARBITRATED DIFFERENCES ON THESE TWO ISSUES AND HE THEREFORE CONSIDERED THE TWO TOPICS CLOSED. PHENG TOLD ME THAT HE WAS UPSET BY SOUVANNA'S HIGHHANDED WAY OF MAKING CONCESSIONS TO LPF WITHOUT CONSULTING WITH HIS NEGOTIATOR OR WITH FAR GENERAL STAFF AND THOUGHT THAT FAR WOULD CRITICIZE PRIMIN FOR MAKING THESE UNILATERAL CONCESSIONS.

4. I ASKED PHENG WHETHER PRIMIN HAD TALKED TO HIM ABOUT HIS INNERMOST THINKING ON LPF DEMAND FOR VICE PRIME MINISTERSHIP OF SOUPHANOUVONG. PHENG CONFIDED THAT SOUVANNA HAD TOLD PHOUMI THAT IN THE EVENT OF SOUVANNA'S ABSENCE FROM LAOS, HE WOULD DESIGNATE SOUPHANOUVONG AS ACTING PRIME MINISTER SINCE HIS BROTHER IS THE "MOST COMPETENT AND SOCIALLY MOST ACCEPTABLE" MEMBER OF A FUTURE CABINET TO FILL THE NUMBER ONE POSITION IN THE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO PHENG, SOUVANNA REMAINS OPPOSED TO FORMALIZING THIS ARRANGEMENT BY INCLUDING IT IN THE PROTOCOL. PHENG SAID PHOUMI FOUND THIS FORMULA UNACCEPTABLE AND LPF

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CONTINUES TO HOLD OUT FOR PROVISION IN PROTOCOL GIVING LPF POSITION OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER.

5. TALKING IN GENERAL TERMS ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS, PHENG OPINED THAT SOUVANNA'S CONCESSIONS MADE JULY 6 CONTRIBUTED TO OPTIMISM LPF LEADERS VOICED IN VIENTIANE ON PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATIONS. PHENG SAID THAT SOUVANNA IS IMPATIENT WITH SLOWNESS IN NEGOTIATIONS. ALTHOUGH

SOUVANNA PAYS LIP SERVICE TO LETTING LPF REFLECT
ON THE DIFFERENCES SEPARATING THE TWO LAO PARTIES,
ACTUALLY HE IS DETERMINED TO MOVE NEGOTIATIONS FORWARD
RAPIDLY AND THIS ACCOUNTS FOR WHAT PHENG CONSIDERS
UNNECESSARY UNILATERAL CONCESSIONS.

6. I AM REPORTING OTHER ASPECTS OF MY DISCUSSION WITH
PHENG RE SPECIFIC ARTICLES IN DRAFT PROTOCOL IN SEPTEL.
DEAN

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